

## PANELLIST'S STATEMENT: NIGEL J HICKSON, DTI

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The Department of Trade and Industry in the UK has a fairly simple, if not somewhat ambitious mission. Basically it is to do whatever is necessary to ensure that UK business remains competitive in relative terms and is able to take its proper place in the global economy. In doing so the ability of industry to respond to technological innovations is all important: businesses that do not, or are not able to adapt to new trading conditions (whether procedural or technical) will rapidly lose their competitive edge. Within such an innovation process, the evolutionary spread of information technology has been a significant factor for nearly all businesses. The "spread" of IT from behind the locked doors of the computer room with "Keep Out" written in red, to every employee's desk (and to the laptops which many of us lug around) has revolutionised the way companies do business both internally and with their customers and suppliers. It has given many firms significant new market opportunities and has enabled small firms (to whom IT only ten years ago would have been an unnecessary luxury), in particular, to compete on an equal basis with their larger cousins.

In maintaining (and indeed, promoting) the effective and efficient use of IT as a significant competitive driver, it is only natural that the DTI should be concerned then with any factors that limit or militate against such efficient and effective use. And therefore it makes sense for us to be concerned with the security of information and IT systems. For the unavailability of these systems (or the data they handle) and compromises to either the integrity or confidentiality of such data, will inevitably lead to a degradation of the service offered by the IT.

DTI is, therefore, extremely concerned that all businesses, no matter how large or small, are equipped with the necessary tools (and these include guidance and advice) to be able to deal with information security issues. Given the importance of IT to organizations, and therefore the criticality of keeping it running, it is only sensible that information security is dealt with as a business and a management issue rather than as simply an *irritant* that can be addressed by technical solutions on their own. To achieve such a focus is not, however, trivial. For too long information security (or rather computer security as it is often mistakenly referred to) has been presented by both Governments and security professionals as a technical issue. The former has, up till now, been rather too concerned about confidentiality (at the expense of integrity and confidentiality) while the latter have been rather too keen to advocate expensive technical solutions.

It is because of the perceived need to “shift” this balance that DTI have, for some time, been co-operating with industry to produce guidance and advice aimed at business managers within organizations. Following on from the introduction of BS7799 (The Code of Practice for Information Security Management) we have introduced a number of guides to try and “grab” the attention of our target audience. These have included the Computer Assurance Guidelines (an attempt at presenting a risk based approach to information security) and the Internet User’s Guide to Security, aimed at those companies about to embrace the Internet for the first time. We are also launching this autumn (just ready for Baltimore) two guides on the “Classification of Information” which enables organisations to classify, and then protect, their information based on its importance, and sensitivity, to the organisation.

In addition to promotion and guidance DTI also organises business briefings and executive lunches to try and secure the attention of the busy executive. We have, for example, just formed an Information Security Round Table bringing together senior executives from both the private and public sectors. We are also, not surprisingly, talking about the “encryption issue” with senior business representatives.

In my short address at Baltimore I will attempt to convince you of the importance of treating security as a business issue, and will give a short update on recent DTI initiatives, give out a few free booklets (including the new ones on “Classification”) and finally engage in vigorous debate with my panel colleagues and, of course, with you, the audience.